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Message Text

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PAGE 01 MANILA 03571 060817Z
ACTION SS-25

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, RP
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS AND PHILIPPINE ELECTION

1. SUMMARY: PRESIDENT MARCOS UNDERSTANDS U.S. INTEREST IN CURRENT PHILIPPINE ELECTIONS AND NORMAL DIPLOMATIC REPORTING REQUIREMENTS BUT FEELS SOME OF EMBASSY'S ACTIVITIES HAVE CLADESTINE AIR WHICH GIVES RISE TO RUMORS OF U.S. INVOLVEMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. AFTER CONVERSATION WITH ME ON BASE ISSUE MARCH 6 (REPORTED SEPTEL), PRESIDENT MARCOS, REFERRING TO OUR PREVIOUS CONVERSATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS (MANILA 2757), SAID THAT AQUINO CASE HAD BECOME MORE COMPLICATED IN MY ABSENCE.

3. I SAID THAT I HAD NOT COME TO DISCUSS AQUINO CASE. I REALIZED IT WAS NOW A CENTRAL ISSUE IN ELECTION CAMPAIGN. I HOPED HE UNDERSTOOD THAT MY INTENTION IN RAISING AQUINO HAD BEEN TO ACQUAINT HIM WITH HOW THIS CASE WAS VIEWED ABROAD; IT WAS NOT TO SUGGEST WHAT HE SHOULD DO OR TO INVOLVE OURSELVES IN THE PHILIPPINE ELECTION. I FELT THAT SUGGESTIONS IN PHILIPPINE PRESS IMPLYING THAT WE ARE INVOLVED ARE REGRETTABLE.

4. HE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THE INTENTIONS OF OUR PREVIOUS
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DISCUSSIONS AND WELCOMED THEM. HE HAD SPECIFICALLY CAUTIONED SECRETARY OF DEFENSE ENRILE FROM MAKING ANY REFERENCE TO THESE DISCUSSIONS IN THE POLITICAL CAMPAIGN. NEVERTHELESS, THE PRESIDENT SAID HE FOUND SOME ACTIONS OF THE EMBASSY WHICH WERE REPORTED TO HIM GIVE RISE TO RUMORS OF AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT. (HE GAVE ME SOME SPECIFICS WHICH I SHALL LOOK INTO.) I REPLIED THAT I HOPED HE APPRECIATED THAT IT WAS NORMAL

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DIPLOMATIC PRACTICE FOR US TO FOLLOW THE ELECTIONS AND TO BE IN TOUCH WITH OPPOSITION AS WELL AS GOVERNMENT CANDIDATES. HE SAID HE APPRECIATED THIS BUT URGED THAT WE AVOID ANY ACTIONS WHICH APPEAR TO BE "SECRET" MEETINGS WITH OPPOSITION LEADERS. I SAID I WOULD LOOK INTO QUESTION AND ASSURE MYSELF THAT EMBASSY COVERAGE OF ELECTION, INCLUDING NORMAL CONTACTS WITH OPPOSITION LEADERS, WAS APPROPRIATE.

5. I TOOK OCCASION TO MENTION THAT DURING MY RECENT VISIT TO WASHINGTON I HAD HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS FULLY WITH OFFICIALS IN THE DEPARTMENT, INCLUDING THE SECRETARY OF STATE, OUR GENERAL RELATIONS AND PARTICULARLY RECENT DISCUSSIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS. HIS WILLINGNESS TO HAVE THESE DISCUSSIONS WAS WELCOMED ALTHOUGH IT WAS APPRECIATED THAT THESE WERE NOT EASY ISSUES FOR DIALOGUE BETWEEN NATIONS. THE FACT THAT THEY HAD BEEN HELD I CONSIDERED AN INDICATION OF THE UNDERLYING STRENGTH OF THE PHILIPPINE-AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP.

6. I CAUTIONED THE PRESIDENT, HOWEVER, THAT UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES PROBLEMS OF PRECEPTION WOULD REMAIN ALTHOUGH I HOPED THEY WOULD BE EASED WHEN HE FELT IN A POSITION TO TAKE SOME OF THE STEPS WHICH WE HAD PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED SUCH AS THE LIFTING OF MARTIAL LAW.

7. COMMENT: PRESIDENT DID NOT SUGGEST FURTHER REGULAR
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MEETINGS ON HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS AND I DID NOT PROPOSE THEM. I BELIEVE WE HAVE MADE OUR POINTS AND THAT DURING PERIOD OF HEIGHTENED SENSITIVITY SURROUNDING ELECTIONS, WE SHOULD LEAVE IT AT THAT. I HAVE LEFT THE WAY OPEN, HOWEVER, TO RENEW THE DIALOGUE AFTER THE ELECTIONS. IT WILL, OF COURSE, BE POSSIBLE EVEN BEFORE THAT TO RAISE ANY QUESTIONS IN THIS AREA WHICH MAY REQUIRE MORE IMMEDIATE RESPONSE.
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